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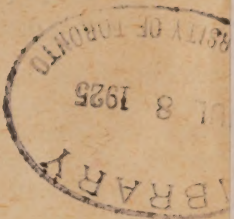
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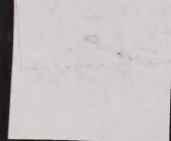
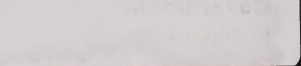
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The Bill to Establish SHIP BOARDS OF TRUSTEES for Rural Schools



A Letter
from the Hon. G. H. Ferguson
Minister of Education
to those interested in Rural Education





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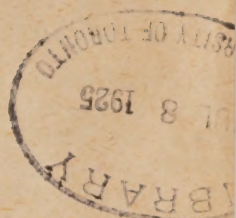
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The Bill to Establish

TOWNSHIP BOARDS OF TRUSTEES

for Rural Schools



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TORONTO

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1925



To the Trustees and Ratepayers

OF THE

Rural Schools of Ontario

Since I began to serve this Province as Minister of Education, I have been giving the question of our rural schools a good deal of careful study. After reviewing all the facts at my disposal, I have come to the conclusion that the country pupil is not getting as good a chance educationally as the city pupil. It is my earnest desire to have such conditions provided in the schools that the youth of rural communities may have an equal opportunity with those of the towns and cities to fit themselves for their life work and for their duties as citizens.

My inquiry into the causes of the existing inequalities has led me to believe that the chief obstacle in the way of providing economically for adequate educational facilities in the rural districts is the difficulty of securing co-operation among the people upon a sufficiently large scale. I believe that this difficulty is due largely to the system by which the rural schools are administered.

The school section scheme of organization was set up eighty years ago in the pioneer days of this Province. In those days of sparse population, scattered settlements, bad roads, and scanty means of communication, it was the natural scheme to adopt. It was designed to provide an elementary education when this was sufficient as a preparation for the simple life of the times. It has served its purpose well, and those who have assumed as trustees the responsibility of directing and administering the rural schools have done a great public service. I need not point out the great changes that have occurred in social and economic conditions within the past eighty years. A new era with new needs, purposes, and ideals has arrived. An elementary education, which is still practically the only education furnished by the rural school, is no longer sufficient to enable the country child to fit himself for the conditions of life which he must meet in the future. Some reform in the present condition of the rural schools is essential if the needs of the children are to be adequately met.

These facts have impelled me to write this letter in order to lay before you (1) the situation in the rural schools, and (2) my proposals for the improvement of the conditions. Those who have the interests of the rural schools at heart will, I am sure, study carefully the facts of the situation, and consider with an open mind the remedy that I am proposing. When you have done this, I shall welcome constructive suggestions as to the policy to be carried out.

I.—The Facts of the Situation

At least three serious conditions in the rural school situation admit of no dispute:

- (1) A great many schools have too small an attendance to permit them to be either economically or efficiently conducted.

(2) The cost of maintaining the schools in any township is not spread fairly among the ratepayers.

(3) The opportunities for high school education are inadequate and unequally distributed.

Three important problems which must be faced grow out of these conditions, viz., the problem of the small school, the problem of inequalities of taxation, and the problem of providing facilities for high school education.

(1) THE PROBLEM OF THE SMALL SCHOOL

The following table will give a clear idea of the large number of one-roomed schools that have a low average attendance:

Average Attendance	Number of Schools
5 or less.....	177
10 or less.....	891
14 or less.....	1,794
19 or less.....	2,902
20 or more.....	2,081

One school in every six has an average attendance of less than ten pupils; one school in every three has an average of less than fifteen; three schools in every five have an average of less than twenty; and only two schools in every five have an average of twenty or more. I am convinced that, for economical management and efficient instruction, no school should have fewer than twenty pupils. Nearly sixty per cent. of the one-roomed schools of the Province are therefore working below their capacity. This situation could easily be remedied by the closing of small schools and the distribution of the pupils among neighbouring schools often equally near at hand. This would not only save money, but also increase the efficiency of the schools. The plan is provided for in the Public Schools Act (Section 74), but the necessary co-operation of school sections to carry it out is difficult to secure.

There can be no question that a child has a better chance in the school with fairly large attendance than in the school with very small attendance. He needs the stimulation of comradeship, competition, and co-operation, which comes from intermingling with others of equal age and ability. The association of many children in the classroom and on the playground gives opportunity for the development of the best qualities of mind and heart. The extent to which this is accomplished is the true test of the efficiency of the school.

The cost of maintaining the schools with low attendance is excessive, as the following statement for the year 1923 will show:

Number of Schools	Average Attendance	Total Cost per Pupil per Year	Cost per Pupil to Government
177	1 to 5	\$248 33	\$99 91
714	6 to 10	144 91	49 91
891	1 to 10	156 00	55 27
Average in all the rural schools		87 36	17 73

The Province is maintaining nearly 900 schools with a total attendance of less than 7,000 pupils at a cost of over \$1,000,000 a year.

The question of high cost also arises in connection with the building of schools. A considerable proportion of the rural school buildings of the Province are old and worn out. The replacing of these by new buildings was checked during the period of the war, and since that time construction costs have been so high that few new schools have been built. The time is soon coming when an extensive school building programme will have to be undertaken. If every school section that needs a new school proceeds to build one for itself, this is going to cost a great deal more money than is necessary. It is important, from the standpoint of economy, that no more schools than are needed to accommodate the school population should be built. In many places where new schools have to be erected, they can be so located as to serve a larger area and thus reduce both building and maintenance costs. Moreover, the adoption of standard plans for the buildings, and the purchase of supplies, equipment, fuel, etc., for all the schools in a township would also tend to greater economy.

(2) THE PROBLEM OF INEQUALITY OF TAXATION

There is considerable inequality in the rates of taxation for school purposes in the various school sections of a township. Some sections because of their small assessment are taxed more heavily than others for the same educational facilities. It is not uncommon for one section to have to pay two or three times as much as its neighbour in the same township. From records which I have at hand showing the school rates in various sections all over the Province, the following cases are selected at random to illustrate this variation:

	Range of School Rates in Various Sections
Township No. 1.....	3.5 to 7.5 mills
Township No. 2.....	6. to 13.9 mills
Township No. 3.....	5.3 to 13.6 mills
Township No. 4.....	3.7 to 11.4 mills
Township No. 5.....	5.5 to 12.5 mills

These rates include both the general township rate and the section rate for ordinary maintenance expenses, and do not cover extraordinary expenditures for building or for the support of continuation schools. The wide variations in rates are typical of conditions that prevail in practically every township of the Province.

No fair-minded person will at this day deny that the education of the children is a duty in which all the ratepayers of the municipality are jointly and equally responsible. The principle of equal financial obligation for schools is fully recognized in urban municipalities. In the town or city the school rate is the same for every ratepayer no matter how many schools there are. The best way to secure equality in taxation for rural schools is to make the unit for school administration correspond with the taxing unit, viz., the township.

(3) THE PROBLEM OF PROVIDING HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

Every child, whether he lives in an urban or in a rural community, should have the opportunity of obtaining an education beyond that afforded by the public school. At the completion of the public school course, the child has just reached the age when he has most to gain by a further period of training. He is not yet adequately prepared to enter upon his life work or to discharge his duties as a citizen. To give him no further school training is to deprive him of the best opportunity he will ever have to develop aright his mind and character.

The urban centres of the Province have on the whole made excellent provision for training beyond the public school course. The villages and towns have their continuation and high schools; the cities have their collegiate institutes and technical schools. Every urban child has ample opportunity to obtain a high school education in either full-time or part-time classes.

On the contrary, rural children are as yet inadequately supplied with opportunities for high school training. Those who live near a centre where a high or a continuation school is established are fortunately situated. But there are many children who live so far from a high school that they have no chance of attending it unless their parents arrange for their transportation or for their boarding away from home. At present the only way by which high school training might be available in many localities would be through setting up continuation schools either by individual sections or by groups of sections in co-operation with each other. Individually the sections can seldom afford to set up a continuation school; and, if they could, they would seldom have sufficient pupils to justify it. Experience has shown that co-operation among sections for this purpose is very hard to secure. On the other hand, if the financial resources of all the sections in a township were combined, it would be possible to provide at convenient points a sufficient number of schools to place a high school education within the reach of every pupil. It is probable that the money that might be saved by dispensing with unnecessary elementary schools would go a long way towards financing the needed high schools.

This high school education may be provided in either of two ways:

In the first place, it may be provided in full-time schools of the continuation school type for those who wish to extend their general education, or to prepare themselves to enter the university or the normal schools, or to fit themselves for commercial, industrial or agricultural life.

In the second place, it may be provided in part-time schools similar in type to those established in urban centres for vocational training. In many respects the conditions in rural communities in this Province are well adapted for the establishment of part-time schools. For many boys and girls who intend to make farming their life work, the ordinary high school course does not afford instruction in some of the branches that would be most useful to them. In addition to the subjects of a general education, they require instruction in the sciences that are fundamental to agriculture and home-making. Because of the absence of such instruction the high school has not attracted these pupils, and their school education is likely to end with the passing of the High School Entrance examination unless some new arrangement is made for its extension. Moreover, the services of these boys and girls are usually required on the farm during the

spring and fall seasons. Consequently, a full-time high school course would not be practicable for them. But their needs might be met by the establishment of part-time courses during the winter months when farm work is not so pressing. For the maintenance of such vocational courses, liberal legislative grants are already provided under the authority of the Vocational Education Act.

II.—The Remedy Proposed

The serious defects of the present rural school system may be traced to two conditions:

(1) The section unit seldom has enough money or enough pupils to make the provision of an education beyond that of the public school feasible.

(2) It is most difficult, if not impossible, to secure the co-operation of section units in measures that would decrease expenditures by a reduction of the number of schools, or in measures that would provide higher educational facilities.

I am convinced that the only means by which the difficulties of the rural school situation can be solved is the adoption of some method by which a greater measure of co-operative action among the people can be assured. Under the section scheme co-operation on an adequate scale cannot be obtained. In the enlargement of the unit lies the hope of bringing about this co-operation. The logical unit to adopt is the township, the unit for municipal purposes and for taxation. For sixty-five years the municipal unit has been the unit for school purposes in all the incorporated villages, towns, and cities of the Province, and the scheme has been attended with excellent educational results. Why should not the municipal unit be adopted for the management of the rural schools also? The principal reason advanced against it is that the population of the township is not so compact as that of the urban municipality. But good roads, the rural telephone, and the motor car have brought the people of the township almost as close together for practical purposes as the people of the town or city.

Because of the lack of sufficient opportunities for co-operative effort, other places outside of Ontario have experienced the same difficulties as we have in providing adequate facilities for education in the rural districts. In many of these places the people have found the solution of their difficulties through the establishment of larger units for the administration of the schools. In Great Britain the parish scheme has been entirely abandoned; and the county, which is the unit for taxation purposes, has been adopted as the unit for school administration. At least twenty-two states of the American Union have abandoned the district school unit and have set up either a township or a county unit. British Columbia has adopted a municipal system of administration for its schools, the school unit corresponding with the municipal unit. In Manitoba, a system of local option is in operation, and some municipalities have already adopted the municipal unit. I am informed that in all these places the change to the larger unit has now the approval of the great majority of the people concerned.

With the desire of raising the rural schools of Ontario to a higher plane of efficiency and service, I introduced a Bill during the 1925 session of the Ontario Legislature to provide for the establishment of township boards of trustees.

The Bill received its first reading and was then laid over for consideration at a future session. The Bill is printed at the end of this letter in order that you may study its provisions. I wish that the fullest opportunity may be taken throughout the Province for the discussion of its provisions, in order that suggestions for improvement may be available when it again comes up for consideration by the Legislature.

The main features of the Bill are as follows:

(1) In a township of not less than three and not more than ten sections, each section is to form a school area. A township with more than ten sections is to be divided by the council into ten areas. Each school area is to elect one member to the board.

The strongest argument in favour of the section method of administration is the opportunity that it gives for the development of local interest in the school. It is desirable to conserve that local interest, and therefore the Bill provides for maintaining the identity of the school section so far as is consistent with having a board of reasonable size. More than half of the townships in the organized counties have ten sections or fewer. In more than half of the townships, therefore, each school section will have a representative on the board. You will thus notice that section connections that have long existed are disturbed as little as possible.

(2) The election of members of the township board will be carried out at the same time and place, under the same conditions, and by the same officers as the election of the municipal council.

The people will maintain the same control over the schools through the township board as they have over other municipal matters, such as roads, bridges, drains, and public health, through the township council. The contention that the Bill proposes to take away from the people the control of their schools has no foundation in fact. Their control will in reality be extended from a single school to all the schools of the municipality. They will have a voice in the management of the high schools of the township as well as of the elementary schools. To prevent the interests of individual schools from suffering, the Bill also provides that the representative of each school area shall have such authority as may be determined by the Board over the schools in that area in regard to repairs, supplies, caretaking, and substitute teachers.

(3) The township school board is given the same powers and duties with respect to the schools of the rural municipality as are given to urban boards with respect to the schools in an urban municipality.

This will secure for each township an equalization of the levies for school purposes, and each ratepayer will be required to pay his fair share and no more for the education of the youth of the municipality.

Further, the combination of the financial resources of the sections, and the greater opportunity for co-operative action will permit the municipality to provide for itself other facilities than merely the elementary schools. The township board can arrange for continuation schools, part-time courses, and medical and dental inspection, which under present conditions are impracticable.

It should be pointed out that the adoption of the township unit of administration does not mean the consolidation of the schools. The two schemes are quite distinct. Under the township system of administration there would probably be in many townships little disturbance of the present schools. The only immediate change would be the distribution of the pupils in a small school among adjacent schools, and any change of this kind would be made only where the local authorities might deem them necessary in the interests of economy and efficiency. While the township scheme would provide for the consolidation of schools where this is deemed by the people to be desirable, such a development is not a necessary part of the scheme, nor is it the main purpose of its adoption.

III.—Two Important Questions

I have laid before you the outstanding facts of the rural school situation and my proposals to remedy the defects. I have emphasized the three serious problems which must be solved, viz.: (1) the waste resulting from the maintenance of a large number of rural schools with a very small attendance; (2) the inequalities in school taxation within the townships, and (3) the provision of adequate facilities for education beyond the High School Entrance stage. I have pointed out how the institution of township boards of trustees, in accordance with the Bill introduced in the Legislature last session, will assist in the solution of these problems. I wish, in conclusion, to ask you to give me the benefit of your views when you have had time to study the provisions of the Bill in connection with the facts I have submitted. If you will give your views in reply to one or both of the following questions the collection and classification of the suggestions will be facilitated:

(1) What modifications of the provisions of the Bill would you suggest in order to make them more effective in meeting the difficulties in the rural schools that I have outlined?

(2) If you have a plan to meet the situation which does not involve the township scheme of organization, give an outline of this plan in sufficient detail to make it clearly understood.

In giving your views, I should like you to remember that merely an expression of your disapproval of my proposals will not assist in solving the difficult problem before us. Resolutions against or attacks upon the Bill without any suggestion as to alternative plans will not help. If you do not approve of the plan I have submitted, you may be able to propose something better. Only *constructive* criticism will be of any value. May I suggest that in considering this problem you keep uppermost in your mind the welfare of the children. It is their interest alone that prompts me to make these suggestions. I have never known a parent who was not anxious that his or her child should have better educational opportunities than were afforded them. *Better citizenship should be our ideal in education.* I invite your sympathetic co-operation in finding a satisfactory solution of our common problems.

Yours very truly,

G. H. FERGUSON,
Minister of Education.

Department of Education,
Toronto, June, 1925.

BILL

AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR TOWNSHIP BOARDS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEES

HIS MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts as follows:—

1. This Act may be cited as *The Township School Boards Act, 1925.* Short title.

2. From and after the coming into force of this Act, all the public schools in every township shall be administered by a board of trustees to be known as "The Township Board of Public School Trustees for the Township of", (naming township) and such board is hereinafter referred to as "a township board." Public schools to be administered by township boards.

3. A township board shall consist of not less than three nor more than ten members to be elected from the school areas in the township determined in the manner hereinafter provided,— Board,— how constituted.

1. In a township containing only one school section, the section shall constitute the school area and the township board shall consist of three trustees to be elected by the electors in the area; Township with only one section.

2. In a township containing only two school sections, each section shall constitute a school area and the board shall consist of three members, one to be elected by the electors in each of the areas separately and the third by the electors in the areas combined; Where there are two sections.

3. In a township containing not less than three nor more than ten sections, each section shall constitute a school area and the township board shall be composed of as many members as there are areas, each area electing one member; Where there are not less than three nor more than ten sections.

4. In a township containing more than ten sections, the board shall consist of ten members and for the Where there are more than ten sections.

purpose of electing the members of the board, the council of the township shall divide the township into ten school areas, grouping together where necessary the contiguous school sections into one area;

Union
section.

5. In the case of a union section when the part lying within the township is assessed for at least two-thirds of the average assessment of the remaining sections of the township, such part shall be constituted as a section, but if such part is not so assessed it shall not be constituted as a section for the purpose of electing a trustee, but shall be attached to such contiguous section in the township as may be determined by the council;

Numbering
school areas.

6. Every school area shall be designated by a number assigned by the township council.

Procedure
at election.

4. The nomination and election of members of a township board shall be conducted in the same manner as nearly as may be and at the same time and place and by the same officers as nominations and elections for the municipal council.

Quali-
fication of
trustees.

5. Every ratepayer in the township who is,—

- (a) a British subject;
- (b) of the full age of twenty-one years;
- (c) not a separate school supporter;
- (d) a resident of the school area in which he seeks election; and
- (e) not disqualified by *The Public Schools Act, 1920*, or any other Act,

may be elected a member of the township board.

Ballot
papers for
each school
area.

6. The clerk of the municipality shall prepare for each school area a separate set of ballot papers containing the names of the candidates in the same form *mutatis mutandis* as those used for members of the council and shall provide for each polling subdivision a sufficient number of ballots to be used by electors in each school area included in whole or in part within the subdivision.

Quali-
fication of
electors.

- 7.—(1) Every person whose name appears upon the last revised voters' list as entitled to vote at municipal elections

and who is not a supporter of separate schools shall be entitled to vote at an election of members to the township board.

(2) An elector in any school area shall also be entitled to vote in any other school area for which he is assessed as a ratepayer. May vote in each area where qualified.

(3) The voters' list shall show the number of the school area or areas in which each elector is entitled to vote. Voters' list to show area in which voter to vote.

(4) A voter, if qualified to vote therein, may vote in each school area for as many candidates as there are offices to be filled but he shall not vote more than once for any candidate. May vote for candidate for each office.

8.—(1) Except as hereinafter provided every trustee shall continue in office for two years and until his successor has been appointed and a new board organized. Term of office.

(2) After the first election, one-half of the members, where the number of elected members is an even number, and the next number higher than one-half, where the number of elected members is an odd number, shall continue in office for two years and the remaining members shall continue in office for one year and until their successors are elected and a new board organized. Retirement of half board annually.

(3) The members who, under the provisions of subsection 2, continue in office for one year or for two years shall be determined by lot at the first meeting of the board after their election and such determination shall be entered upon the minutes. Determining who shall retire after first election.

9. A union school shall be regarded as belonging to the township in which it is located. Union schools.

10.—(1) The township board shall determine the schools which the pupils shall respectively attend within the township. Board to settle right to attend any school.

(2) A township board shall admit to any school within the township any non-resident pupil if the inspector reports that the accommodation is sufficient for the admission of such pupils and that the school is more accessible for him than any school in the township in which the pupil resides. Non-resident pupils.

(3) When a pupil residing in one township attends school in another township, the township board of the township in which he resides shall each year pay to the township board of the township where he attends school the cost of the education of such pupil. Liability of township for non-resident.

Deter-
mining cost
of education
of non-
resident
pupils.

(4) The cost of the education of non-resident pupils shall be determined in the following manner,—

The amount spent in permanent improvements, including the sum included in paying off debentures and the interest thereon, shall be added to the total cost of maintenance of the schools of the township; from this sum shall be deducted the amount apportioned to the schools of the township out of the Legislative grant; the remainder shall be divided by the total number of days' attendance during the year of all the pupils attending the schools of the township, and this amount shall be multiplied by the number of days' attendance during the year of the non-resident pupils.

Section-
boards
dissolved.

11. When a township board has been established all the assets and liabilities of the boards of the several sections of the township shall be vested in and assumed by the township board.

Board to
have powers
and perform
duties of
urban board.

12.—(1) A township board shall have *mutatis mutandis* the same powers and duties and shall be subject to the same conditions with regard to vacancies on the board, controverted elections and the resignation of members as are prescribed by *The Public Schools Act, 1920*, for boards of trustees in urban municipalities.

Trans-
portation of
pupils.

(2) A township board shall have power to make such arrangements for the transportation of pupils to and from school as it may deem expedient.

Authority of
trustee
representing
school area.

(3) The trustee who represents each school area shall have such authority as may be determined by resolution of the township board over the schools of the area he represents in regard to repairs, supplies, caretaking, the provision of substitute teachers and such other matters as the township board may deem expedient.

First
meeting in
each year.

13.—(1) Every township board shall hold its first meeting in each year on the third Wednesday in January at the hour of two o'clock in the afternoon, or at such other hour on the same day and at such place as may have been fixed by resolution of the former board or, if no place has been fixed, at the usual place of meeting of the council of the township.

Procedure
at meeting.

(2) The procedure at such meetings shall be the same as nearly as may be as that prescribed by *The Public Schools Act, 1920*, in the case of meetings of urban school boards.

14. The members of the township board shall be paid for their attendance at meetings of the board or of any committee of the board at the same rate per day, and at the same rate per mile for travelling, as members of the council are paid for their attendance at meetings of the council and its committees. ^{Remuneration of trustees.}

15. This Act shall come into force and have effect upon a day to be named by the Lieutenant-Governor by his Proclamation, and from and after the date so named all the provisions of *The Public Schools Act, 1920*, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act shall cease to apply and shall be deemed to be repealed. ^{Commencement of Act.}

